**Study notes – Joshua 20&21, 13th November 2022**

**Welcome**

* What is your favourite city and why?

**Worship** – **Hebrews 4:12-14**

Read these verses and praise God for:

* His Word
* Jesus, our great High Priest
* The fact that we can approach his throne with confidence and there receive his mercy and grace

**Word – Joshua 20&21**

**Cities of Refuge:**

* Six cities, home to the priestly tribe of Levi, deliberately spaced throughout the land, as previously ordained by God (Deut 19, Num 35), offering refuge and ensuring justice for both Israelites and foreigners living amongst them…
* Jesus as the New Testament fulfilment of cities of refuge – we are all guilty of wrong-doing and need refuge from our sin. Jesus is a “merciful and faithful high priest” who makes atonement for our sins (Heb 2:17). Through Jesus’s sacrifice, freedom and forgiveness is available to all.
* The “gathered church” as a place of refuge, embodying God’s requirement to “act justly, love mercy and walk humbly” with God (Micah 6:8)

**Levitical Cities:**

* Forty-eight cities, “tithed” by the other tribes to the Levites for them to live amongst them, distributed across the land with some in territory still to be conquered…
* The “scattered church”, with a focus on serving Jesus in the communities where he has placed us

**God’s faithfulness to his promises**

* The Lord God is faithful to all his promises and deserves our whole-hearted worship and praise
* God’s promises are fully trustworthy and are there to be claimed by us, through Jesus (2 Cor 1:20)

**TURN OVER FOR QUESTIONS…**

**Passage discussion questions (choose a few…)**

* What do the principles behind the cities of refuge tell us about God’s attitude towards: a) human life b) justice?
* Was it important that the other tribes needed to “tithe” cities to the Levites from out of their promised inheritance? How do you understand Joshua 13:33, which says that God had promised the Levites that He Himself would be their inheritance?
* Is it significant that some of the cities allocated were located in parts of the land that was still to be conquered?
* What are the three different aspects of the promises the Lord had made to Israel (Joshua 21:41-43)?
* Do you agree that the section Joshua 21:41-43 is the “heart” of the book of Joshua? Is there a “theological tension” between the statements made here and the text of Judges1?

**Reflection and application questions (choose a few…)**

* How would you explain to someone what it means to say that “God is our refuge” (Psalm 46:1) and that Jesus is “a merciful and faithful high priest” (Hebrews 2:17)?
* How can the “gathered church” best demonstrate God’s concern for justice and mercy in today’s society? How can you live out these characteristics in your own life?
* How does God’s plan for the Levitical cities demonstrate his principles for mission and ministry?
* Do you agree that ministry efforts should focus more on community transformation than church activity? Why/why not?
* How can we as “scattered church” live distinctively and impact society for Christ?
* Are there promises that God has made for his people that you need to step out and claim for yourself?
* Is there one particular idea that you will take away from these passages to further reflect on/apply/act upon?

**Prayer suggestions**

* For the application of the message of this passage in our lives, both when we are “gathered” and “scattered”
* For us: a) to help Johnny and Kate to “finish well” b) as we seek the Lord in moving forwards in the new year
* For any people we know in need of “refuge”, of pastoral care and/or of salvation in Jesus Christ